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Two sides to every story(teller): competition, continuity and change in narratives of European integration

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**Two sides to every story(teller): Competition, continuity
and change in narratives of European integration**

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Two sides to every story(teller): Competition, continuity and change in narratives of European integration

The word narrative has gained prevalence in the vocabulary of European politics and EU studies in recent years. Enduring questions about the history, purpose and finality of the European integration process now fall within the scope of the narrative turn: narratives underpinning political discourses and intellectual writings about European integration are increasingly being scrutinised. Yet few of these types of narrations have been put into a longitudinal perspective, in order to address elements of change and continuity in the construction and diffusion of narratives. This article presents a historical survey of the twentieth century, looking at political and intellectual types of narration. This highlights the value of a competitive model for narratives of European integration. Whereas hegemonic narratives are rare, new and competing narratives appear as the norm in the majority of political debates about Europe during the twentieth century, from the inter-war antecedents until present-day discussions about the EU. This article questions the singular replacement of an ‘old’ by a ‘new’ narrative and provides evidence for a degree of continuity in how narratives present themselves in diverse forms, as constructions and reproductions of political realities, intellectual thought, and the European past.

Keywords: European integration; narratives, European Union; narration; history

Introduction

Few things in life are more paramount than a good story, and it is unsurprising that the European Union’s quest for a narrative has burgeoned into political discourse and intellectual thought over the past years. The European Commission’s call for a ‘New Narrative of Europe’ to create a new impetus for rapprochement between the European peoples (Barroso 2013) has seen reverberations in the European press (Hale 2012; Privot 2014) as well as research in the field of European Studies (Kaiser 2015; Mayer 2015). There is even talk about a ‘narrative turn’ within the discipline, with new contributions dedicated to the prospects of existing and future narratives of European integration. Mark Gilbert raised the possibility of revising the existing progressive

narrative for a post-national European future, 'built upon a belief that integration represents a trend from which there will be no receding', with alternative ways to characterise the nature and process of European integration (2008, 642-643).

More recently, Ian Manners and Philomena Murray called for more narrative scholarship on the EU, and took a first step with the suggestion of an analytical framework of EU narratives. Their contribution offered a critical examination of six distinct narratives of European integration, ranging from the Nobel narrative to Green Europe, each of those accounts seeking 'to provide a simple story about the EU' and contesting other narratives (2016, 197). In their concluding thoughts, Manners and Mayer expressed a wish to see future research agendas addressing the role of narratives to explain as well as understand their importance for the European project (2016, 199). The European Commission's call and this recent scholarship demonstrate that the quest for narrative has come to thrive in both politics and academia, with clear signs of interaction between the two fields.

The 'narrative turn' is relatively new to the field of European studies. Reflection about narratives has mostly centred on the recent history of the European Union, even though narration has consistently appeared in both the political discourse and intellectual writing on European integration during the twentieth century. This is especially the case for the years immediately following the Second World War, when the *pères fondateurs* played a vital role in the emergence of a perceived consensus about the process and finality of European integration (Muscatelli 2016). At the political level, the *personas* of Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet, with their vision of political union through economic means, have come to pervade the Union's progressive narrative of peace, its symbols and policy programmes (Kaiser 2011).

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Similarly, a strong sense of narration can be detected in the early academic work on federalism and the *finalité politique* of economic cooperation by Henri Brugmans as well as in the functionalist perspective defined by Ernst Haas (Brugmans 1962; Haas 1964). It is precisely these types of political and intellectual visions on European integration, projected as the holy grail of ever-closer union, which have become enmeshed with the post-war institutional construction (Gilbert 2008, 644; Kølvråa 2012). These visions have come to constitute the progressive narrative, which has also received the most Eurosceptic criticism in the last two and a half decades, as the European Union has taken a more prominent role in the daily lives of Europeans (Booker and North 2003; Gallagher 2015).

The purpose of this article is to take a longitudinal approach to the meaning of the ‘narrative turn’ for European integration history. It aims to explore a longer historical timeframe in which different types of narration of European integration have been constructed, diffused, and reproduced. This article also contributes to the growing literature that questions the assumption of a perceived consensus on the (progressive) trajectory of European integration after the Second World War, which Mark Gilbert has aptly summarised as a ‘Whig’ narrative (2014).¹ It questions the singular nature of such a type of narration, by demonstrating how underlying political and ideational rivalry expressed itself in a plurality of narratives during most of the twentieth century. The article comprises a longitudinal approach, i.e. a historical survey of a longer period, and examines competing narratives (hegemonic and peripheral) and their change over time. Therefore, I will explore the pre-war origins as well as the re-emergence of newer and older narratives, contextualising their role and meaning in recent times. As Luis Bouza

¹ In this article I use both ‘Whig’ narrative and progressive narrative to identify the post-war consensus which has developed into a official narrative of peace and closer integration.

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3 suggests, the singular replacement of the ‘old’ progressive narrative (or ‘Whig’
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5 narrative) by a ‘new’ hegemonic narrative is questionable, and this survey strengthens
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7 the view plurality and competition are prevalent in the history of European integration
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9 (Bouza 2017, xx).
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11 This article considers the suggestion that plurality is a way out of the narrative
12
13 conundrum facing the European project. Manners and Murray have argued that ‘a
14
15 plurality of narratives is required’ to understand European integration (2016, 197).
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17 Similarly, Gilbert has labelled narrative in terms of a ‘clash of wills’, retracing these
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19 clashes to the early years of post-war European integration (2008, 647). The
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21 suggestions are steps in the right direction but necessitate a paradigm that explains the
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23 hierarchical nature of these contested narratives. Plurality as an approach does not
24
25 automatically distinguish between dominant and peripheral narratives. Moreover, the
26
27 analysis of ‘narratives over time’ is generally confined to the recent history of European
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29 integration, not considering competing narratives in the more distant past (Manners &
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31 Murray, 2016, 197). This article suggests narrative scholarship should give pause to the
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33 larger historical context in which multiple narratives of European integration have
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35 emerged, and the degree to which narratives have evolved over time.
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40 The recent scholarly interest in the ‘narrative turn’ in European studies has
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42 chiefly addressed political and intellectual narratives. While politicians and scholars
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44 constitute important actors in the production of narratives in the subject of European
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46 integration, journalists are also to be considered as a relevant group. While this article
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48 acknowledges the importance of professional journalists and the importance of news
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50 reporting in the production and diffusion of narratives, the chosen longitudinal approach
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52 necessitates a limitation on the selection of relevant actors. Hence, this historical survey
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54 of narratives of European integration will limit itself to those individuals who have
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made a noticeable political or intellectual contribution to the subject, as explained below. Moreover, the survey constitutes a practical contribution to the ‘narrative turn’ and does not address the theoretical debate concerning narrative analysis.

What would a longitudinal approach to the narration of European integration look like in practice? Before surveying the twentieth century history and identifying competing narratives of European integration, this article will clarify its position on what constitutes a narrative. The next section will address the conceptual dimension behind narration in history, which breaks down in two major elements: a report of past events and a normative vision for the future. I will argue that these two elements are inseparable and should be considered when examining narratives, since ideational thinking about European integration runs in parallel to the construction of a political entity. In the same section, the article will identify several obstacles in the scholarship of European integration history, respectively the choice for 1945 as a zero year, the separation of the intellectual and political dimensions of European integration, and the entanglement of the European idea with a distinct political construction which has created a tendency towards teleological singularity. This will reinforce the message that a longitudinal and comprehensive approach, considering political, intellectual, as well as hegemonic and peripheral narratives, offers a promising avenue for narrative scholarship.

The subsequent sections will draw on case material from the twentieth century, primarily from the inter-war years, the post-war years, and the decades since 1989. Each of these periods saw moments of rupture (World War I, World War II, the end of communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe) which had a tremendous effect on the ideational sphere and institutional organisation of Europe. The article uses political speeches and intellectual production to exemplify the types of narration which took hold

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3 throughout these periods. The end of World War I and the dissolution of the continental
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5 European empires brought about a reflection about the meaning of European unity and
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7 the creation of a new political order to avoid a repetition of the horrors of war. For the
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9 inter-war years, I will look at a narrative of decline and rebirth of the continent against
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11 the backdrop of globalisation (Coudenhove-Kalergi, Demangeon), European civilisation
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13 and the cultural ties between nations (Dawson, Heerfordt), to comprehend how the
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15 recent European past was narrated to provide a visionary blueprint for European
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17 integration. In this period, a political narrative of a progressive international order took
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19 hold, which was expressed in the creation of the League of Nations but had a distinct
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21 European taste. This progressive narrative found expression in Briand's memorandum
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23 for a federal Europe but would continue to thrive in the next decades.
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27 The Second World War meant both a rupture and progression in terms of
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29 narratives of European integration. The gruesome extent of destruction in Europe and
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31 the threat of the Cold War reinforced the message of peace and unity after the war. The
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33 European nations built a new political order which clearly separated the issue of
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35 security (NATO) from the organisation of peace (Council of Europe). Although
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37 European integration after the Second World War followed a similar 'institutional'
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39 pathway as during the inter-war years, the European Coal and Steel Community and the
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41 European (Economic) Community had a distinctly functionalist logic behind – which
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43 both reincorporated an older message of peace (Schuman) with a technical programme
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45 to reduce economic barriers (Monnet). What came to be seen as the eventual hegemonic
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47 narrative of post-war European integration was not left unchallenged: in this section,
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49 several examples will be given of political actors who challenged this singular type of
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51 narration – and underlying vision for the future Union. This will include for example the
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53 myriad of views from *pères fondateurs*, as well as 'obstructionist' narratives (De
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Gaulle, Thatcher). These were not examples of ‘setbacks’ but distinctly different interpretations and narrations of European integration.

In recent decades, the hegemonic ‘Whig’ narrative witnessed its peak with the steps taken towards a political and monetary union in the Maastricht Treaty – presented as the idea of an ever-closer European Union. In practice, this narrative was adapting to the changes after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the setbacks of the European monetary system. Under the umbrella of the ‘Whig’ narrative, a panoply of adaptations emerged in response to political events, such as the widening and deepening of integration (including the Eastern bloc’s ‘Return to Europe’), the differentiation of European integration (multi-speed Europe), and the global narrative. While the umbrella of the progressive ‘Whig’ narrative still serves as a container for new and reappearing narratives, the ongoing clash of wills suggests that the hierarchy and distinction between narratives will increasingly become blurred. The exceptionally hegemonic nature of the ‘old’ progressive narrative is set to dwindle in light of peripheral narratives. The article seeks to demonstrate, first, that a longitudinal view breaks the temporal divisions of the twentieth century and, second, a competitive model helps to move beyond a singular interpretation of European integration history.

Abstruse entity, intricate scholarship

Narratives are ubiquitous and history writing is perhaps one of the oldest forms of narration. The earliest examples did not only contribute to development of a historical methodology, they also influenced literature and how information was passed on in written form (Luraghi 2007). From the earliest accounts of historical writing, we are struck with the importance of narrative. Yet, as the introduction to this special issue has raised, ‘the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of the narrative approach are

seldom made explicit' (Bouza 2017, xx). In this article, a narrative is first of all regarded as an account of events that has occurred in the past. Following Labov, a narrative means 'a choice of a specific linguistic technique to report past events' (Labov 1997, 395). Facts and broader developments find a comprehensible meaning when structured in a story. Hence, a narrative inherently relies on generalisation: facts of lesser importance are left out, to highlight the remaining events. In this process, the narrative-producer controls the changes and the outcome, in such a way that every story reflects the perception, vision, and even interests of the producer (which Bouza has defined as 'the political usages and potential of these notions'; 2017, xx). This second element of perception and vision is equally constitutive for the definition of narrative used in this article. Narratives are more than reconstructions of the past; they also contain political and normative traces.

What makes a narrative different from a vision? As previously mentioned, narratives pertaining to European integration often comprise an account of the past (a driving force or process behind integration) but also fuel a view on the present and future (a political project). It is this combination of a historical account and a normative layer which makes a narrative distinct from its counterpart. The fact that narratives represent a choice and selection of facts implies they are not just a powerful technique for history writing but can also be used to serve political aims. There is a palpable potential for politicisation in the field of European studies, where the object of study (the EU in its current form) is an issue of political salience and aspirations for deeper integration. The institutional changes that have led to the establishment of the EU have developed hand in hand with historical and theoretical reflections on the nature and purpose of European integration.

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The European studies discipline has two characteristics which sets it apart from other disciplines. It is geared towards a political project rather than an entire branch of knowledge or sphere of society. The discipline is also far from unitary; rather, it is an amalgam of different academic fields – comprising a variety of methods and approaches. Although this has resulted in a uniquely comprehensive understanding of its subject, several problems have emerged from its innate characteristics. First, there is a tendency to still consider 1945 as a ‘zero year’ for the history of European integration, foregoing an extension to its pre-war historical roots (Kaiser and Schot 2014). Consequently, two types of scholarship have developed, one oriented towards the *longue durée* ‘ideational’ history of thinking about European unity, another focused on the creation of a ‘physical’ European community out of the ashes of the Second World War. In French, this distinction is sometimes presented as the difference between *l’intégration européenne* and *la construction européenne*, to separate the intellectual from the institutional history, with the ‘zero year’ 1945 as a turning point. In English, there is a palpable difference between the works on the European idea (Buszello and Misztal 1999; Pasture 2015) and those addressing the history of the European Union (Dinan 2014; Middelaar 2009). The absence of connections between these strands of scholarship, leads me in the direction of a second problem.

The intellectual and political dimensions of European integration are considered as two separate things, hence there is no space to tie intellectual and institutional narratives together. The ‘ideational’ history of European unity often stops at the Second World War or takes a more institutional flavour for the post-war period (Barjot et al. 2007; Du Réau 2008). Authors tend to stick to one time-period (pre- or post-1945) and one approach (intellectual or institutional). For instance, historians writing about European unity until the Second World War, chiefly focus on the visions of prominent

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3 thinkers and build towards an intellectual history of the European question (Chabert
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5 2007, Lützel 2007). An exhaustive volume edited by Mark Hewitson and Matthew
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7 D'Auria (2012) on thinkers of European integration between 1917 and 1957
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9 transgresses the 1945 turning point but deals exclusively with a narrative of crisis and
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11 neglects questions pertaining to the institutional order. Historical surveys by Bossuat
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13 (2008) and Bruneteau (2006) end at the emergence of *l'Europe concrète* after 1945. But
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15 was there no 'solidified' Europe before? The institutional aspect is absent, as well as
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17 any reference to narratives. Jean-Michael Guieu has rightly argued that the European
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19 institutional order during the inter-war years has received considerably less attention
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21 from scholars (2012).
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25 The situation after 1945 is equally problematic, when a different discussion
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27 exclusively related to the institutional architecture of Europe takes off (Glencross 2014).
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29 Here, the debate about Europe's post-war institutional architecture is been taken up by
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31 historians and political scientists who limit themselves to the institutional development
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33 of a supra-national and intergovernmental Europe (Leonard and Taylor 2016). Hitherto,
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35 there has been scant interest in the variety of narratives of European integration which
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37 have taken hold in the years since 1945 (apart from the 'Whig' narrative and the role of
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39 the *pères fondateurs*), and shaped the discourse of political actors. The prominence
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41 given to the institutional order becomes more palpable closer to the present-day
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43 scholarship, as a mechanical understanding of the European Union takes up more
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45 bookshelf-space and leaves less room for engagement with developments in the
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47 ideational sphere (Cini and Borragán 2016). The preservation of a turning point and a
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49 separation of dimensions oppose a longitudinal and comprehensive exploration of
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51 narratives. Connections and overlaps are especially important for the mid-twentieth
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century, to understand which ideational and political traces of the pre-war European order merged into the new political reality.

The third problem refers to the fact that an entire discipline is built around one political project – European integration effectively being EU integration. The entanglement of the European idea with the construction of a supranational entity has spurred a tendency towards teleological singularity i.e. the threat of a perceived linear and continuous process of integration (Gehler 2014). A want for great temporal linkages and the identification of linkages should not flatly result into an invention of Europe unity, as a social construction from past to present (Delanty 1995). In older scholarship it is common to trace the European idea back to antiquity or the medieval ages, scathing over periods of disruption, nationalism and alternative visions of Europe (Heater 1992; Pagden 2002). Studies on federalist ideas of Europe reveal the implicit normative assumption that a federal union is the outcome of the process (Burgess 2000). This means that a longitudinal perspective should be handled with care, as there is a risk of being trapped in a singular and progressive logic of integration (Farrell et al. 2002, pp. 15-18). However, Since the financial and economic crisis, scholars have also shed light on European disintegration, to counterbalance the dominance of integration theory and a belief in the irreversibility of the post-war supranational order (Parker, 2016). Considering the characteristics of the scholarship on the history of European integration, the article now turns towards a historical survey of the twentieth century, as outlined in the introduction.

Unity in divergence?

The First World War was a calamitous event in every sense of the word: it brought the breakdown of continental empires, the creation of nation-states with a

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3 myriad of new national borders in Europe, successful and aborted revolutions, and an
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5 intense reflection about the nature of war and peace. Why had European civilisation
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7 failed to prevent death and destruction on an immense scale, and what type of order
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9 could withstand a repeat of war? These two questions would occupy the minds of
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11 European intellectuals and politicians, as they sought to reconstruct the past and distil a
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13 vision for the future. Here, I look at the importance of a narrative of a declining Europe
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15 which thinkers inspired by a sense of European heritage developed into visions of
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17 geopolitical, civilizational, or cultural rebirth. Nevertheless, the inter-war years saw the
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19 emergence of another narrative, built upon the idea of a progressive, international order
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21 to organise peace between the European nations.
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25 The fear of the Europe in decline was perhaps best evocated through a book
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27 written by Oswald Spengler, entitled *Untergang des Abendlandes*, which led to popular
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29 success in Germany and found translation in many other languages (Spengler 1991).
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31 Spengler's idea of a natural cycle of growth and decline of civilisations contained a
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33 clear warning: the European civilization risked a retreat from former glory.
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35 Contemporary thinkers used Spengler's warning of decline to construct a larger
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37 narrative around the crisis of European civilisation, including a vision for the future. In
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39 this context, the name of Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi clearly reverberates, as the 'most
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41 dynamic theoretician and propagandist during the interwar period' (Bugge 1992, pp. 96-
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43 97). In *Panuropa*, his major publication from 1923, and in his ensuing works, Count
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45 Coudenhove-Kalergi presented a Europe as a continent at risk of global and economic
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47 irrelevance vis-à-vis emerging powers: 'no other world region has such a great past as
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49 Europe – but no other has such an uncertain future as Europe' (1982 p. 23). Although
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51 *Panuropa* thrived on enthusiasm and idealism, a political project seen from a global
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53 perspective underscored this narrative. Coudenhove-Kalergi referred both to a United
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States of Europe and a European Federation as models for a future organisation of the European states.

The evocation of past glory combined with a political finality led to relative success, and found interest among the German-speaking nobility in Europe. The disappearance of the Austro-Hungarian and German empires, the abolition of nobility and the creation of new republics, necessitated for many noblemen a new concept for the notion of ‘being of noble descent’. While Coudenhove-Kalergi found inspiration in geopolitics for his narrative of decline, others sought for visions in the cultural and even religious sphere. Count Harry Kessler and Count Hermann Keyserling saw European integration as a source of renewal of imperial culture. In his *Das Spektrum Europas*, written in 1928, Count Keyserling underlined the crisis of the European spirit, or also a crisis of values; this would be overcome through a new European order in which the aristocracy could take a leading role again (Keyserling 1928; Gusejnova 2012).

Noble circles were not the only ones providing narratives built upon a notion of European decline. Similarly, Paul Valéry and Albert Demangeon wrote about cultural decline and the crisis of European civilization. Christian Heerfordt, a Danish physician, narrated European integration as a form of civilizational ties between European states (including colonies) in his monograph *Une Europe nouvelle, premier essai* (1924). The historian Christopher Dawson formulated a narrative of European unity based on Christian traditions. Dawson saw religion as a major force of community in Europe’s past and present. He espoused Christianity as the cultural roots of the continent, from the Roman era until the twentieth century, and the source for future spiritual unification of humanity in his book *The Making of Europe* (1932).

The idea of organising peace at the international level was not new, but the First World War paved the grounds for experimentation with a new type of political order. A

narrative of a progressive international order found was expressed in the creation of the League of Nations, a peace organisation proposed by US President Woodrow Wilson in 1918. While the League was to be a universalist organisation, in practice it became a platform dominated by the European states. The League provided the means to develop an entirely different narrative of European integration: one which wasn't built on the ashes of the old continental empires, but rooted in a more rationalist approach to international politics. The practical means of cooperation – driven by a functionalist logic – would stop the European states from going to war again. A desire for peace through supranational governance incentivised French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand to call, in his speech to the League of Nations Assembly on 5 September 1929, for 'some sort of federal link' between the 'peoples who are geographically grouped as the peoples of Europe' (Briand 1929).

Briand's original idea was to pursue economic means, such as a common market, to achieve closer cooperation between the European nations. However, his written *Memorandum* (1930) favoured political rapprochement as a first step towards any technical cross-border cooperation. This retreat from a functionalist logic towards a political project meant that other European governments and even the League raised concerns over the idea. Briand's federation, embedded in a narrative of progressive political order, sat uneasily with the League – which was both a universalist organisation and the institutionalisation of Europe's political order. A federation risked competing with the League and, for the European states, touched upon the issue of national sovereignty. As with the narrative of a declining Europe, the idea of a progressive European order did not materialise into a strong consensus. While the narrative of a progressive order was a powerful one – Briand's speech was backed by a

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number of European intellectuals – the politicisation of the League’s functionalist approach to international cooperation muddled the message (Fleury and Jilek 1998).

The inter-war years served as a successful laboratory of ideas, with two overarching, but opposing narratives of European integration taking hold. One was reminiscent of past greatness; another professed rationalism and progress as the future. A clash of wills between thinkers and among politicians prevailed and no hegemonic narrative of European integration emerged. Elements of the two opposing narratives from this period would resurface during the twentieth century – in particular the functionalist logic behind cooperation, the tension between a supranational federation and national sovereignty, as well as the global perspective on European integration. The Second World War did not put a halt to the adaption and reinvention of narratives, as older ideas took hold in a new political context of the post-war order.

Europe’s clash of wills

Rarely does the passing of armed conflict provide a complete rupture with the past, and the Second World War is no different. Allied cooperation guaranteed a degree of continuity between the European countries in terms of cooperation and planning, while the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union after the war created a political context in which narratives of European integration could thrive again. However, the involvement of the two major Cold War powers in the reformatting of post-war Europe did not fundamentally alter the unaddressed questions from the past. As Stirk and Weigall argue, ‘many of the problems which the victors of the First World War had signally failed to solve were still there’ (Stirk and Weigall 1999, 31). Political leaders and thinkers were confronted with questions of security and cooperation in Europe, similar to those asked several decades earlier. One was the question over the

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3 place of Germany, another about type of economic cooperation that could spur recovery
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5 and provide the functional means for closer integration.
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7 What followed in the years after 1945 was a myriad of institutional layers,
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9 constructed to achieve a degree of intra-European cooperation through different means.
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11 The Western-European states worked on concrete plans (Western Union, NATO) and
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13 treaties (Brussels, Dunkirk) that would lock in diplomatic relations and military
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15 cooperation. On the economic front, the Marshall Plan necessitated the creation of the
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17 Organisation for European Economic Co-operation, to distribute American financial
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19 aid. In Central and Eastern Europe, rival institutions were set up to spur economic
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21 recovery across the communist satellite states. The Hague Congress in 1948 led to the
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23 creation of a Council of Europe. The new inter-governmental body adopted a
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25 Convention for Human Rights, which underlined the ‘achievement of greater unity
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27 between its members’ through the application of human rights and fundamental
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29 freedoms (Council of Europe, 1950). The Schuman Declaration in 1950 paved the way
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31 for the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) – based on
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33 functionalist and supranational principles.
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38 These plans, treaties and organisations brought an institutional layer to European
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40 integration that was unparalleled at the time. In contrast to the League of Nations, post-
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42 war European cooperation was disentangled into separate spheres – with no threat of
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44 institutional overreach. Many of the organisations created after 1945 still function
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46 today, either merged with the EU or exist as a distinct legal and political framework.
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48 Although established for different purposes, they are often taken together as the ‘start’
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50 of post-war European integration. However, the EU’s progressive narrative glosses over
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52 this multitude of institutional layers, as well as the competing narratives that underscore
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54 their creation. For the period 1945-1949 the EU webpages make reference to a
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determination of Europeans ‘to prevent such killing and destruction from ever happening again’, but apart from a reference to peace and the creation of the ESCSC there is no mention of the wider context of post-war integration (European Union, 2016).

The perceived progressive development of the EU, with origins extending back to the creation of the ECSC and the endeavours of the *pères fondateurs*, has merged into a hegemonic narrative of peace and prosperity which overlooks historical origins, institutional rivalries and competing visions for European integration. The political leaders of post-war Europe are described as men who shared the ‘same ideals’ and ‘worked tirelessly towards, and inspired, the European project.’ (European Union, 2016). A closer reading of the speeches of the *pères fondateurs* reveals that such a shared, normative objective for a singular European project is the work of fiction. Some ideas for European integration were a long way off from Jean Monnet’s functionalist logic (and the idea of integration through economic means), as Altiero Spinelli revolutionary European project of his 1944 *Manifesto* (Gilbert 2014) and Konrad Adenauer’s notion of *Europe as a Third Power* demonstrate (Adenauer 1980). These reveal a clash of wills, rather than a unity of narrative.

In addition, elements of older narratives resurfaced in new narratives. Winston Churchill’s speech (1946) on a United States of Europe was rooted in the past, with references to the work of Coudenhove-Kalergi and the vision of Briand, as well as the institutional order of the League of Nations as ‘knowledge and material with which to build’. A speech given in in 1949 by Robert Schuman entitled ‘The Century of Supranational Communities’ harked back to past thinkers such as Erasmus and Kant and the dream to create an organisation for the achievement of perpetual piece (Schuman 1949). Ideas of political federation and the organisation of peace had already

1 surfaced during the inter-war period and were taken up by politicians and thinkers who
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3 had their intellectual roots in the years between the two world wars. Schuman's 1950
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5 speech put Franco-German reconciliation at the heart of his economic plan, in many
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7 ways similar to the language Briand had used in the 1920s: 'For Germany and for
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9 France peace means an end to a series of painful and bloody encounters, of which every
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11 page in history is stained' (Briand 1926). The Schuman Plan was an accumulation of
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13 ideas, rather than a ground-breaking new pathway, as it was partly modelled on both
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15 inter-allied cooperation (Ruhr Authority) and the League of Nations' technical
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17 organisation.
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23 The years and decades following 1945 show that the progressive 'Whig'
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25 narrative of European integration only developed in relation to other ideas and
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27 narratives. Rival ideas of *pères fondateurs* were omitted, while the more recent
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29 discrepancies of views were labelled as obstructions to the European project. Charles
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31 De Gaulle's defiance of the Community-approach and his own narrative of *l'Europe des*
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33 *patries* have been perceived as a hindrance, rather than an alternative approach to
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35 European integration. Margaret Thatcher's relationship with the European Community
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37 has often been described in terms of enmity, despite her important contribution to the
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39 creation of the Single Market. 'Obstructionists' such as De Gaulle and Thatcher, with
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41 their narratives for Europe have arguably been as important for the course of
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43 institutional integration, than those who professed the consensus of the progressive
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45 'Whig' narrative (De Gaulle 1962; Gilbert 2008, 647; Thatcher 1988). Henceforth, it is
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47 essential to see these visions as a clash of wills and perhaps an expression of competing
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49 narratives, in order to problematize the singular and teleological approach taken to
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51 European integration.
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Europe as umbrella

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the communist states in Central and Eastern Europe forced a number of daunting questions upon European political leaders in the early 1990s. How would the Community respond to the reunification of Germany and the turbulence following the break-up of the Soviet Union? Economic questions were also on the agenda: the Single European Act had come into force, with the objective of creating a single market, and plans were drawn up to create an economic and monetary union. The progressive ‘Whig’ narrative arguably reached its peak as hegemonic metanarrative in this period, when there was optimism about the expansion of peace and prosperity to the post-communist states, as well as the finality of an ever-closer union. Back in 1990, a Dutch memorandum in 1990 had expressed firm commitment to the achievement a federal structure for Europe (Laffan 2005, 189). The change from the European Community to the European Union, accompanied with expansion of EU power in several fields and the creation of new shared and supporting competences, was a symbolical marker for major political economic changes to come in the next years.

A single narrative offered a great deal of normative continuity. Yet, in practice the ‘Whig’ narrative formed an umbrella, harbouring a myriad of new and old narratives that appeared following the contingencies of the late 1980s and early 1990s. While Manners and Murray see these as distinct narratives, ‘a shift away’ from the old type of narration, I contend that many of these are effectively subservient narratives (such as ‘economic Europe’ and ‘social Europe’) because they remain embedded in the progressive logic of the ‘Whig’ narrative: they are peripheral narratives representing variations of a belief in progress and closer integration (Manners and Murray 2016). Nevertheless, changes in discourse in the last decades suggest there is an ongoing clash

of wills between politicians and thinkers who foster these competing narratives of European integration. Although the hierarchy of narratives has become blurred, three examples three examples highlight how the ‘Whig’ narrative has served as a normative umbrella to most of the new developments.

First, the Maastricht Treaty represented a move towards the deepening of European integration, with the creation of a political and economic union. The increase in membership over the last decades, and the prospect of new members, made the notion of differentiation increasingly important. Negotiations for admission of the EFTA states (Austria, Finland, Sweden and Norway) to the EU were fraught with disagreements over possible opt-outs, concessions and the changes new members would bring to the functioning of the institutions. The idea of a multi-speed mentioned in a paper written by Wolfgang Schäuble and Karl Lamers (1994), raised the prospect of a core-Europe consisting of five or six countries pursuing deep economic and political integration, while the other members would remain in a looser formation. This allowed the preservation of the progressive narrative, while satisfying the needs of individual member states. *Europe à la carte* was introduced and would regularly reappear in the next years, in the context of the eurozone and its distinct institutional governance (Robert, 2015). Differentiated integration as a sub-narrative has also found its expression in academic thought, with Jan Zielonka suggesting has created a neo-medieval empire, or some form of *polyphony* of integration (Zielonka 2014).

Second, the opening towards Central and Eastern Europe was another development which led to an adaptation of the progressive ‘Whig’ narrative of European integration. The 2004 enlargement of a large group of states which previously fell under communist rule was narrated in a way which was consistent with the aim of bringing peace to the continent and working towards European unity. The prospect of

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enlargement was presented as the ‘return to Europe’ for the Central and Eastern European countries. Briefly after 1989 observers had already coined the phrase, when the former communist satellite states displayed a ‘will to return to Europe’ and normality, that went ‘hand in hand with the struggle for national and individual freedom’ (Garton Ash 2012). Similar images appeared in public statements. For example, a German Minister of State marked the 2004 enlargement as the end of a divide in Europe: ‘As new EU members, the ten states returned from the periphery to the heart of Europe’ (Roth 2014). Underlying the idea of a return was the myth that ‘the East’ was taken away from (Western) Europe. As part of one progressive narrative of European integration, the ‘return to Europe’ failed to include any differentiated experiences of twentieth century history. Nevertheless, it the return-narrative continues to thrive for remaining ‘outsiders’ such as Ukraine, Moldova and Serbia (Zhurzenko 2014; Heinisch and Landsberger 2016).

Third, ‘global Europe’ has proven to be a powerful vehicle for public discourse. Globalization became a catch-all term in intellectual writing and political discourse to define a new era of trade liberalisation, financial flows and interconnectedness – and reminiscent of the narration of the global during the inter-war period (Hay and Rosemond 2002). With the memory of the Second World War more distant and the rise of global threats, the global has transformed the perception and outlook of the EU. The global rose to the prominence in the 1990s, in large part to thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas, who made a famous plea for a European constitution that would help to stop the Union from decaying ‘into a mere market, sodden by globalization’ (Habermas 2001, 9). Global threats, ranging from negative economic externalities to the impact of climate change, now form part of the working agenda of the institutions, and EU aspires to become a global actor. The global-narrative has also found its way in political

statements by national leaders and EU functionaries (Merkel 2016, Juncker 2015).
Instead of peace, economic preponderances play a more prevalent role in a narrative of
global Europe. But the global was never an entirely new entirely phenomenon and the
discourse is reminiscent of the early twentieth century.

So far, these new narratives have formed part of the progressive narrative's large
umbrella, but the distinction between the overarching 'Whig' narrative and the new
narratives is increasingly opaque. Manners and Murray have contended that 'global
Europe' represents a distinct narrative, however, this and many of the new narratives
don't (yet) question the progressive, functional core of the 'Whig' narrative. This
represents at least some form of hegemony of the latter, although this might be a
temporary phenomenon in return of a more prevalent mode of competing narratives.
The Commission's search for a 'new' narrative fits within a shift away from the old
'Whig' narrative, but overlooks the fact that hegemony has been the exception in the
past. Competing narratives are a perpetual phenomenon, even within the belly of the
'Whig' narrative, ready to question the overarching drive of European integration.

Conclusion

The 'narrative turn' in the field of European studies has helped to untangle the
normative dimension of narration about European integration. In turn, this has
problematised the EU's replacement of an 'old' hegemonic narrative with a 'new'
narrative. This article's contribution to the debate on narratives of European integration
is structured as a questioning of the singular passage of narratives – through a
longitudinal approach which puts competitive narratives at the centre of the analysis.
Following Manners and Murray's suggestion for more study of the plurality of
narratives, this article has pursued an analysis of 'narratives over time', i.e. the

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introduction of the larger historical context in which multiple narratives of European integration have emerged and evolved over time. Singular stories gloss over ideational and institutional rivalries and ignore the affluence of historical events that make up European history. First, this article has identified narratives which have emerged following key events of the twentieth century, such as the two World Wars and the collapse of the Soviet Union. These historical events incentivised politicians and intellectuals to reframe their understanding of Europe’s past and envision a blueprint of the future.

Second, the article has sought to link the emergence of the progressive ‘Whig’ narrative after 1945 with its historical origins, both the technical organisation of the League of Nations and inter-allied cooperation, as well as the multi-layered institutional context of the post-war period. The ‘Whig’ narrative omits the clash of views of the so-called *pères fondateurs* (such as Altiero Spinelli, Robert Schuman and Winston Churchill) in favour of a singular and linear understanding of the purpose and finality of the European project. Moreover, rival views are depicted as obstructionist rather than competing narratives. Finally, this article has traced the continued development of ‘Whig’ narrative and its fostering of new narratives in light of a changed historical context. I have used the examples of widening and deepening of European integration, to demonstrate how the hegemonic umbrella adapted itself to the turmoil after 1989. In addition, the example of global Europe was introduced to demonstrate how past narratives can re-emerge in a changed context and might in the future question the perception of a hegemonic narrative. The history of European integration should be written in plural and understood as a changing hierarchy of narratives. This suggests that a historical survey and a competitive model of narratives are useful tools for the future exploration of narration about the EU.

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